



NEWS RELEASE



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California Department of Social Services and San Bernardino County Embark on Innovative Project to Inform the Future Direction of Foster Care Services

SACRAMENTO – California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Director John Wagner today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with San Bernardino County that will conduct a pilot program aimed at helping the most troubled foster children in group homes adapt to living in a single family environment more quickly. The program is a “Residentially-Based Services (RBS) Demonstration Project” as established by Assembly Bill 1453 (Statutes of 2007).

“We are working with our local partners to create the best mix of services to help California’s foster youth thrive as they grow up to be independent adults,” said Director Wagner. “This project offers an extraordinary opportunity for us to test alternative program designs and funding models that can be used by policy makers to enhance group home foster care services statewide. I applaud San Bernardino County for its commitment to our foster youth and willingness to operate this important project.”

DeAnna Avey-Motikeit, Director of Children and Family Services, San Bernardino County states “I am pleased that we have been selected as one of the potentially four pilot counties. This model is built on a willingness to share staff resources, funding and decision making authority between public systems for the benefit of high need youth who are at risk of ‘falling through the cracks’, and doing what is best for children.”

The goal of San Bernardino County’s RBS program is to reconnect foster care children and youth who have significant mental health challenges with their families and communities. Starting July 1, San Bernardino County will introduce 30 of its most challenging children in group homes between the ages of 13 to 18 to a unique mix of services.

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The program is unique as it focuses on child and family involvement in every stage of treatment. It will provide intensive treatment initially, as well as services and a case management team that continues support after the children have transitioned into a family environment.

When the 24-month pilot is completed, the state and county will evaluate its success based on reduced lengths of stay in group homes, reduced episodes of psychiatric hospitalizations, fewer runaway incidents and stronger connections with their families and communities. If successful, the pilot and similar programs in other counties, will guide state policy makers in enhancing foster care services statewide.

Foster care group homes provide a placement option for children with significant emotional or behavioral problems who cannot live at home and require more restrictive environments. The RBS project will provide a unique mix of services to help improve their behavior in order for them to successfully and quickly move into more family-like placements or permanent homes.

San Bernardino County will bring together the Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Behavioral Health and the Department of Probation to deliver these services to youth in foster care. The target population will be youth in the highest level of group home care, or in out-of-state facilities or failing placements, and who have had multiple prior psychiatric hospitalizations.

BY THE NUMBERS

Number of Children in Foster Care in California	Approximately 67,000
Number of Children in Foster Care in San Bernardino County	Approximately 4,000
Number of Children in Group Homes in California	Approximately 9,250
Number of Children in Group Homes in San Bernardino County	Approximately 480

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